Iowa Department of Transportation

Information Technology Division

GIS Council

A proposal to coordinate and integrate departmental geospatial activities

Iowa Department of Transportation GIS Council Proposal

By Eric Abrams – Geospatial Coordinator, IT Division

An Opportunity to coordinate and integrate department geospatial activities

Background

The Iowa Department of Transportation has invested heavily in geospatial technologies over the last 13 years. We hired and continue to fund a GIS coordinator since the late 1990's. We have made the Iowa DOT a leader in Linear Referencing. We are funding a geospatial service layer called GeoNexus in 2009. The Iowa DOT has invested over 13 million dollars in GIS over the past 13 years.

As the use of geospatial data and geographic information systems (GIS) grows, so does the need to coordinate these activities. It is important for the department to make sure information which has a spatial component is integrated and used in standard, common and easy to use ways. Due to the increasing volume of activity, it is becoming more difficult for the coordinator and the central GIS staff to be effective at coordinating all geospatial activities and projects.

Because of this problem, Geospatial staff in IT has changed gears and streamlined activities. The Geospatial Coordinator and central GIS staff is now focusing on supporting GeoNexus, Geospatial Training, imagery management, LRS, Desktop software, geospatial standards, and system level coordination, research and development. The Division support teams have taken over development and integration of applications that need geospatial components. Geospatial Information systems (GIS) are 90% business data and 10% spatial. A well designed database, storing its business data and common geospatial standards that make geospatial data available to the department, is essential for a successful GIS implementation.

The Highway Division has taken steps to move into the geospatial arena by hiring staff that coordinate and drive office GIS activity. The Planning and Modal Division for the most part already has staff in place to work with me and their support team on GIS projects.

Duties

The GIS Council will act as a strategic tool for consistent communication in the maintenance of DOT geospatial standards and guarding the DOT's geospatial investment. The Council will be the coordination platform for the various office GIS leaders by providing a forum for ideas and information. The GIS Council will strive to facilitate the activities of the GIS practitioners group, comprised of GIS user staff and currently lead by Steve Kadolph.

The GIS Council will also act as a geospatial quick response team for emergencies that require spatial analysis, maps and data. For example during the floods of 2008 the GIS Council could of assisted by sharing staff resources and creating current maps and web portals of flooding impacts, locations of equipment, etc.

Structure

The GIS DOT Geospatial Coordinator will chair a Council initially composed of five (5) members representing offices with dedicated GIS staff positions which coordinate and support their office GIS activities on a full time basis. In addition there will be one (1) at large seat chosen by the GIS practitioner group. As more full time office and/or divisional GIS coordinators are hired, IP Steering will decide whether to add seats to the GIS council. It is important the group not become too large and maintain a healthy balance for meeting needs of offices, divisions and enterprise geospatial visions and goals.

The group will meet on a weekly basis for up to one hour. Minutes will be taken and action items created. These minutes will be made available on DOTNET. The Council will adopt a quarterly report for the IP Steering which will also be posted on DOTNET after being accepted by IPSC.

The initial members of the GIS Council will include:

Chair, DOT Geospatial Coordinator: Eric Abrams (IT Division)

Council Members:

Office of Transportation Data:	Ryan Wyllie
Office of Location and Environment:	Derek Peck
Office of Maintenance:	Shawn Blaesing-Thompson
Office of Traffic & Safety:	TBD (Office Coordinator currently being hired)
Office of Systems Planning:	Adam Shell
GIS Practitioners Group (At Large):	Steve Kadolph